

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 L-03 SS-15 NSC-05 /053 W

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R 161718Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3748

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 1L652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UK

SUBJ: SOUND AND FURY IN COMMONS JULY 15

REF: (A) LONDON 10476; (B) LONDON 11045

SUMMARY: HOUSE OF COMMONS WAS IN STATE OF UPROAR AND OUT-  
RAGE JULY 15 FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT BY LEADER OF THE  
HOUSE, MICHAEL FOOT, THAT GOVERNMENT WAS INSTITUTING  
"GUILLOTINE" (CLOTURE) ON FIVE BILLS NEXT WEEK. CONSERVA-  
TIVE LEADER THATCHER SAID FOOT AND GOVERNMENT WERE SHOW-  
ING CONTEMPT FOR PARLIAMENT, AND SHE ANNOUNCED CONSERVA-  
TIVE MPS WOULD NOT PAIR DURING DEBATES ON BILLS. SPEAKER  
WAS ASKED FOR RULING ON LEGITIMACY OF USING 5 GUILLOTINES  
ON A SINGLE DAY, AS WELL AS ON GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL TO  
FUSE DEBATES ON FOUR BILLS INTO TWO SEPARATE MOTIONS.  
GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL IS AN EFFORT NOT ONLY TO COMPLETE  
PARLIAMENTARY ACTION ON ESSENTIAL LEGISLATION BEFORE UP-  
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COMING AUGUST RECESS, BUT ALSO REPRESENTS AN EFFORT TO

COMPLETE ACTION ON BILLS SUPPORTED BY LABOR LEFT BEFORE LABOR LEFT IS ASKED TO GO ALONG WITH GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED CUTS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE. END SUMMARY.

2. SOUND AND FURY ERUPTED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS JULY 15 WHEN LEADER OF THE HOUSE, MICHAEL FOOT, ANNOUNCED BUSINESS FOR NEXT WEEK. HOUSE WILL CONSIDER, FOOT SAID, 3 "TIMETABLE MOTIONS" ON FIVE GOVERNMENT BILLS NEXT TUESDAY. THIS MEANS THAT GOVERNMENT IS CALLING GUILLOTINE INTO USE RESTRICTING SEVERELY TIME ALLOWED FOR DEBATE. THE BILLS ARE ALL HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL AND UNDER HEAVY ATTACK BY CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION. AIRCRAFT AND SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRIES WILL RECEIVE A SEPARATE MOTION, WHILE DOCK LABOR AND HOSPITAL PAY BEDS WILL BE COVERED TOGETHER IN ONE MOTION, AND EDUCATION AND TIED COTTAGES IN ANOTHER. EACH OF THE THREE MOTIONS WILL BE DEBATED FOR THREE HOURS ONLY WITH SEPARATE VOTES ON THE FIVE SEPARATE BILLS.

3. MRS. THATCHER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, SUPPORTED BY HER VOCAL CONSERVATIVE COLLEAGUES, DREW ON HEAVILY INFLAMMATORY LANGUAGE ATTACKING FOOT'S PROPOSALS. MRS. THATCHER NOTED THAT NO LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS HAD PROPOSED TO GUILLOTINE FIVE MAJOR BILLS ON A SINGLE DAY AND SHE ACCUSED FOOT OF SHOWING UNPRECEDENTED "CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT". ANNOUNCING THAT CONSERVATIVES WOULD NOT PAIR TO ALLOW GOVERNMENT MINISTERS TO REPRESENT THIS "DICTATORIAL GOVERNMENT" OVERSEAS, THATCHER SAID CONSERVATIVES WOULD BE IN WESTMINSTER TO DEFEND A "PARLIAMENT IN DANGER" FROM GUILTY MEN. (AN OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO FOOT'S OWN WRITINGS ON PARLIAMENT.)

4. THE SPEAKER WAS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO MAINTAIN ANY TYPE OF ORDER WITH CHEERING AND JEERING, SOME OF IT IN DISRESPECTFUL LANGUAGE, FROM ALL PARTS OF THE HOUSE. THE SPEAKER SEEMS TO HAVE HAD GIVEN INADVERTENTLY A RULING THAT BILLS MAY BE FUSED FOR PURPOSES OF PARLIAMENTARY AGENDA PREPARATION ALTHOUGH AT A LATER TIME HE AGREED TO CONSIDER CONSERVATIVE REPRESENTATIONS AS TO THE LEGALITY OF GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE GUILLOTINE. HE INDICATED THAT HIS RULING MIGHT NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MONDAY WHEN THE EXACT AGENDA IS PRESENTED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

5. FOOT, OF COURSE, WAS UNDER HEAVY FIRE FROM THE OPPOSITION BENCHES INCLUDING LIBERALS JEREMY THORPE AND NEW LEADER DAVID STEEL WHO SAID THE ONLY PRECEDENT FOR THE APPEARANCE OF SO MANY GUILLOTINES IN ONE DAY WAS THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, FOOT'S PROPOSAL

SEEMED TO HAVE CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FROM THE LABOR SIDE  
AS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF BREAKING THE LOG JAM IN THE  
GOVERNMENT'S LEGISLATION PROGRAM. MOST ANALYSTS CONCLUDE  
THAT FOOT WAS PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS TO COMPLETE ACTION ON  
SIGNIFICANT PARTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM (SOME OF  
WHICH ARE LAID DOWN IN ITS ELECTION MANIFESTO) BEFORE THE  
GOVERNMENT PRESENTS ITS DETAILED PLANS FOR CUTS IN PUBLIC  
EXPENDITURE NOW EXPECTED BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY RECESS

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(SEE SEPTTEL).

6. COMMENT: ENFORCEMENT OF THE GUILLOTINE WAS BOUND TO  
BREAK THE TENUOUS PEACE WHICH HAD BEEN LABORIOUSLY RE-  
ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE

OPPOSITION AFTER THE BREAK IN PAIRING ARRANGEMENTS OVER THE DISPUTED VOTE ON THE SHIPBUILDING AND AIRCRAFT INDUSTRIES NATIONALIZATION BILL. THE NEW PAIRING BREAK MAY CREATE SOME MINOR PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT IN HAVING TO BRING HOME GOVERNMENT MINISTERS FROM OFFICIAL TRIPS ABROAD. (CROSLAND IS SCHEDULED TO BE IN BRUSSELS TUESDAY JULY 20 TO DISCUSS THE EC COMMON FISHERIES POLICY.) THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THE LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE WHIPS' OFFICES HAS BEEN CUT.

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7. THE OUTLOOK FOR TUESDAY IS NOT ENCOURAGING FOR THE GOVERNMENT ALTHOUGH THE CHANCES OF LOSING ON ANY OF THE BILLS ARE SLIGHT. THE NEWLY ELECTED LABOR MEMBER FROM THURROCK, DR. MCDONALD, WILL REPRESENT AN ADDITIONAL LABOR VOTE ON TUESDAY (SEE SEPTTEL), AND THE OPPOSITION WILL NOT BE TOTALLY UNITED ON ALL OF THE MOTIONS.

8. THE GUILLOTINE HAS BEEN IN THE WIND FOR SOME TIME AND AS TEMPERS COOL MPS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE HOUSE WILL LIKELY SIMMER DOWN, SOMEWHAT MORE SECURE IN THEIR VACATION PLANS FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER AFTER THE VOTES ARE COUNTED. IT NOW SEEMS THAT THE COMMONS WILL STAY IN SESSION THROUGH THE FIRST WEEK IN AUGUST AND PROBABLY NOT BE RE-CONVENED, AS FOOT HAD EARLIER THREATENED, IN SEPTEMBER. THE HOUSE OF LORDS GETS OFF A WEEK EARLIER IN LATE JULY, BUT HAS TO RETURN IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER TO COMPLETE ACTION ON A FEW ESSENTIAL BILLS.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REPORTS, LOWER HOUSE, LEGISLATIVE BILLS, GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 16 JUL 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** morefirh  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976LONDON11120  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760275-0223  
**From:** LONDON  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760751/aaaabslb.tel  
**Line Count:** 204  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 LONDON 10476, 76 LONDON 11045  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** morefirh  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 01 APR 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <01 APR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <02 APR 2004 by morefirh>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SOUND AND FURY IN COMMONS JULY 15  
**TAGS:** PGOV, PINT, UK, (FOOT, MICHAEL), (THATCHER)  
**To:** SECSTATE WASHDC BONN BRUSSELS COPENHAGEN DUBLIN THE HAGUE LUXEMBOURG PARIS  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006